

Contents

A Message from Governor M. Jodi Rell.....	viii
A Message from Commissioner of Education Betty J. Sternberg.....	ix
Connecticut State Board of Education Position Statement on Nutrition and Physical Activity in Schools.....	x
Acknowledgments.....	xii

Section 1 – Overview 1

Introduction	1
Background	2
▪ Governor’s Directive.....	2
▪ School Wellness Policy.....	3
▪ Connecticut’s School Nutrition Policies Pilot.....	3
Rationale for Policy Development	4
▪ Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Impact Learning.....	4
▪ Children’s Current Nutrition and Physical Activity Status.....	4
▪ Schools Make a Difference.....	5
▪ Importance of Local Policies.....	5
Addressing District Concerns with Policy Development	6
▪ Responsibility for Student Health.....	6
▪ Financial Implications.....	6
▪ Time Constraints.....	6
How to Use this Guide	7
▪ Policy Requirements and Recommendations.....	7
▪ Steps for Policy Development.....	7
▪ Policy Components.....	8
▪ Timeframe for Development and Implementation.....	8
▪ Policy Definitions.....	9
▪ Acronyms.....	13
References	14
Resources	15
▪ Health and Achievement.....	15
▪ School Wellness Policy.....	16

Section 2 – Steps for Creating Local Policy 17

Step 1: Identify Policy Development Team	17
▪ School Health Team Members.....	17
▪ Minimum Core Members for School Health Team.....	18
▪ Recommended Team Members.....	18
▪ Team Leader.....	19
▪ Collaboration.....	19
▪ Responsibilities of School Health Team.....	19
Step 2: Identify Local Policy Development Process	21
▪ Federal and State Laws and Regulations Pertaining to Nutrition and Physical Activity.....	22
Health Education.....	22
Physical Education.....	22
Physical Activity.....	22
Foods and Beverages.....	23
Food Safety.....	24
Step 3: Conduct Local Assessment Process	25
▪ Nutrition and Physical Activity Practices.....	25
▪ Student Health Data.....	26
Step 4: Prioritize Needs and Develop an Action Plan	28

Step 5: Draft Policy Language	29
▪ Tips for Drafting Policy Language	30
Step 6: Build Awareness and Support	31
▪ Tips for Success.....	31
Step 7: Adopt and Implement the Policy	32
Step 8: Maintain, Measure and Evaluate	33
References	34
Resources	34
▪ Coordinated School Health	34
▪ School Health Teams	35
▪ Health and Achievement.....	35
▪ School Improvement Plan.....	36
▪ Data and Trends.....	36
▪ Program Assessment	37
▪ Policy Development.....	38
▪ Sample Policies	40
▪ Success Stories	41

Section 3 – Policy Component: Nutrition Education and Promotion..... 43

Goal	43
Rationale	43
Policy Recommendations	43
▪ Standards-Based Sequential Nutrition Education.....	44
▪ Connecting with Existing Curriculums	44
▪ Education Links With School	44
▪ Professional Development for Teachers.....	44
▪ Appropriateness of Nutrition Component of Comprehensive Health Education Curriculum	44
▪ Educational Reinforcement	45
▪ Nutrition Promotion	45
▪ Staff Awareness.....	45
▪ Staff Members as Role Models	45
Implementation Guidance	46
▪ Standards-Based Sequential Nutrition Education.....	46
Curriculum Development.....	46
Health Education Assessment Project (HEAP)	46
Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)	47
Content Areas	47
Nutrition Themes	48
Nutrition Education Strategies.....	48
Developmentally Appropriate and Culturally Relevant Activities	49
▪ Connecting With Existing Curriculums	49
Connecting Nutrition Concepts Across the Curriculum	50
▪ Education Links With School	51
Coordinated School Health	51
Cafeteria-Based Nutrition Education	51
After-School Programs	52
▪ Professional Development for Teachers.....	52
▪ Appropriateness of Nutrition Component of Comprehensive Health Education Curriculum ...	53
▪ Educational Reinforcement	53
▪ Nutrition Promotion	54
▪ Staff Awareness.....	54
▪ Staff Members as Role Models	55
References	56

Resources	57
▪ Dietary Guidelines	57
▪ Curriculum Development	57
▪ Nutrition Education	58
▪ Nutrition Lessons and Programs	59
▪ Games and Activities.....	60
▪ Interactive Nutrition and Physical Activity Websites for Children	61
▪ Healthy Eating Calculators.....	62
▪ Education Links with School.....	62
▪ Food Safety Education for Children.....	62
▪ Connecting with Existing Curriculums	63
▪ Handouts for Children, Parents and School Staff Members.....	64
▪ Nutrition Promotion	67

Section 4 – Policy Component: Physical Education and Physical Activity 69

Goal	69
Rationale	69
Policy Recommendations	69
▪ Standards-Based Sequential Physical Education.....	70
▪ Daily Physical Education K-12	70
▪ Daily Recess	70
▪ Physical Activity Opportunities Before and After School	70
▪ Physical Activity and Punishment.....	70
▪ Safe Routes to School.....	71
▪ Use of School Facilities Outside of School Hours.....	71
▪ Incorporating Physical Activity into the Classroom.....	71
Implementation Guidance	72
▪ Standards-Based Sequential Physical Education.....	72
Curriculum Development.....	72
Differentiating Physical Education and Physical Activity	72
Physical Activity Recommendations for Children	73
▪ Daily Physical Education K-12	73
Quality Physical Education	73
Components of a Quality Physical Education Program.....	74
Teacher Qualifications.....	74
Content.....	76
Instructional Practices.....	76
▪ Daily Recess	77
Guidelines for Recess.....	77
Recess Before Lunch.....	78
▪ Physical Activity Opportunities Before and After School	78
Characteristics of Quality Extracurricular Physical Activity Programs.....	79
▪ Physical Activity and Punishment.....	81
▪ Safe Routes to Schools.....	81
▪ Use of School Facilities Outside of School Hours.....	82
▪ Incorporating Physical Activity into the Classroom.....	83
Physical Activity Breaks.....	84
References	85
Resources	87
▪ Guidelines and Standards	87
▪ Curriculum, Best Practices and Programs	88
▪ Evaluation	89
▪ Recess.....	90
▪ Physical Activity Before and After School.....	90
▪ Behavior Management.....	91
▪ Safe Routes to School.....	91
▪ Classroom-Based Physical Activity	91

Section 5 – Policy Component: Nutrition Standards for School Foods and Beverages 93

Goal	93
Rationale	93
Policy Recommendations	93
Policy Recommendations for School Meals	94
▪ Nutrition Guidelines	94
▪ Menu Planning.....	94
▪ Breakfast	95
▪ Special Dietary Needs.....	95
Policy Recommendations for Other Foods and Beverages	96
▪ Food or Beverage Contracts	96
▪ Cafeteria A la Carte Sales, Vending and School Stores	96
▪ School-Sponsored Events	96
▪ Fundraising	96
▪ Classroom Snacks.....	97
▪ Food Brought Into School	97
▪ Celebrations	97
Implementation Guidance for School Meals	98
▪ Nutrition Guidelines	98
USDA Requirements	98
Dietary Guidelines.....	98
Sharing Nutrition Information	99
▪ Menu Planning.....	100
▪ Breakfast	100
Encouraging Breakfast Consumption	100
School Breakfast Program	101
▪ Special Dietary Needs.....	101
Implementation Guidance for Other Foods and Beverages	102
▪ Food or Beverage Contracts	102
▪ Cafeteria A la Carte Sales, Vending and School Stores	102
▪ School-Sponsored Events	102
▪ Fundraising	102
Ideas for Healthy Fundraising Alternatives	103
▪ Classroom Snacks.....	104
After-School Snack Program	104
▪ Food Brought Into School	104
Nutrition Guidance.....	104
Food Safety	104
▪ Celebrations	105
Ideas for Activities.....	105
Ideas for Healthy Foods.....	106
▪ Nutrition Standards for Foods and Beverages at School.....	107
▪ Summary of Connecticut’s Healthy Snack Standards.....	108
Recommendations.....	108
Snack Categories	108
Beverages.....	108
Snacks and Sweets.....	108
Fruits and Vegetables	109
References	110
Resources	111
▪ Nutrition Requirements and Guidelines	111
▪ Menu Planning.....	111
▪ Fruits and Vegetables	112
▪ Farm to School	113
▪ Breakfast	113
▪ Special Diets.....	114

▪ Healthy Fundraisers and School Stores.....	114
▪ Healthy Snacks.....	115
▪ Celebrations.....	115
▪ Nutrition Standards.....	116

Section 6 – Policy Component: Other School-Based Activities to Promote Student Wellness ...119

Goal.....	119
Rationale.....	119
Policy Recommendations.....	119
▪ Surroundings for Eating.....	120
▪ Time for and Scheduling of Meals.....	120
▪ Free and Reduced-Price Meals.....	120
▪ Summer Food Service Program.....	120
▪ Financial Operation of Child Nutrition Programs.....	120
▪ Qualifications of Food Service Staff Members.....	121
▪ Training for Food Service Staff Members.....	121
▪ Food Safety.....	121
▪ Food Rewards and Punishment.....	121
▪ Sharing of Foods.....	121
▪ Staff Wellness.....	121
Implementation Guidance.....	122
▪ Surroundings for Eating.....	122
▪ Time for and Scheduling of Meals.....	122
▪ Free and Reduced-Price Meals.....	123
▪ Summer Food Service Program.....	123
▪ Financial Operation of Child Nutrition Programs.....	123
▪ Qualifications of Food Service Staff Members.....	124
▪ Training for Food Service Staff Members.....	124
▪ Food Safety.....	125
Connecticut Food Safety Requirements.....	125
Federal HACCP Requirement.....	125
▪ Sharing of Foods.....	126
▪ Food Rewards and Punishment.....	126
Food as a Reward.....	126
Alternatives to Food as a Reward.....	126
Food as Punishment.....	126
▪ Staff Wellness.....	128
References.....	129
Resources.....	129
▪ Surroundings for Eating.....	129
▪ Time for and Scheduling of Meals.....	129
▪ Food Safety.....	130
▪ Financial Management.....	131
▪ Qualifications of Food Service Staff Members.....	131
▪ Training for Food Service Staff Members.....	132
▪ Summer Food Service Program.....	132
▪ Alternatives to Food as a Reward.....	132
▪ Staff Wellness.....	132

Section 7 – Policy Component: Communication and Promotion 135

Goal.....	135
Rationale.....	135
Policy Recommendations.....	135
▪ Consistent Health Messages.....	136
▪ Engaging Families.....	136
▪ Engaging Students.....	136

▪ Partnering with Community Organizations	137
▪ Food Marketing in Schools	137
▪ Media	137
Implementation Guidance	138
▪ Consistent Health Messages	138
▪ Engaging Families	139
▪ Engaging Students	140
▪ Partnering with Community Organizations	141
▪ Food Marketing in Schools	143
Acceptable and Unacceptable Marketing Techniques	143
Promoting School Meals	143
▪ Media	144
References	145
Resources	145
▪ Engaging Families	145
▪ Engaging Students	146
▪ Partnering with Community Organizations	146
▪ Marketing	148
▪ Working with the Media	148

Section 8 – Policy Component: Measurement and Evaluation 149

Goal	149
Rationale	149
Policy Recommendations	149
▪ Monitoring	150
▪ Policy Review	150
Implementation Guidance for Evaluation	151
▪ Monitoring and Policy Review	151
Process Evaluation	152
Outcome-Based Evaluation	152
Indicators	152
Evaluation Indicators	153
Evaluation Partnerships	153
References	154
Resources	154
▪ Evaluation	154

Section 9 – School Nutrition Policies Pilots 157

Overview	157
▪ Background	157
▪ Goal	157
▪ Application Process	157
▪ Pilot Requirements	158
▪ Support Training	159
▪ Support Resources	160
▪ Funding	160
Pilot Results	161
▪ Existence of School Health Team	161
▪ School Health Team Membership	161
Table 1. Representation on School Health Teams	161
▪ Importance of Member Representation	162
Table 2. Rating of Importance of Member Representation	162
▪ Policy Adoption	162
▪ Time for Team Meetings	163
▪ Continuation of School Health Team	163

▪ Barriers to Policy Development	163
Table 3. Perceived Barriers to Policy Development.....	163
▪ Policy Development Resources	164
Table 4. Usefulness of Policy Development Resources	164
▪ Policy Promotion Strategies.....	165
Table 5. Strategies Used to Promote Policies	165
▪ Benefits of Participating in the School Nutrition Policies Pilot	166
▪ Pilots' Perceptions of Results.....	166
Table 6. School Health Teams' Perception of Pilot Results	167
Pilot District Profiles	168
▪ Farmington Public Schools	169
▪ Franklin Elementary School.....	177
▪ Killingly Public Schools.....	199
▪ Milford Public Schools.....	202
▪ Norwalk Public Schools.....	210
▪ Putnam Public Schools	217
▪ Regional School District #10	221
▪ Ridgefield Public Schools.....	229
▪ Salem Public Schools.....	238
▪ Windham Public Schools.....	251

A Message from Governor M. Jodi Rell



In June 2005, I directed the Commissioner of Education to develop and publish guidelines to assist local school boards of education in adopting school nutrition policies, including:

- Methods for promoting physical exercise both during and after the school day through physical education programs as well as with organized recreation programs;
- Methods of providing healthy meals and food options, including fresh fruit and vegetables, at outlets within a school and which address not just the nutritional value of food sold in vending machines and stores, but also meals such as breakfast and lunch served to children in school cafeterias;
- Processes for augmenting health, science or physical education curricula to highlight to students the need for a healthy lifestyle and the roles that diet and exercise play in a healthy lifestyle;
- Strategies for conducting meetings and forums with parents, teachers, members of the board of education and parent-teacher organizations to identify the support parents need in order to encourage healthy lifestyles in their children;
- Techniques to involve students in the discussion of school nutrition as a component of promoting healthy lifestyles to ensure that school nutrition policies are effective and recognize the realities facing students in the school environment; and
- Research and data, including health trends and nutritional information that local school districts can use and provide to parents to make balanced, rational decisions when implementing comprehensive local school nutrition policies.

In response to my directive, this *Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies* has been developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. It provides comprehensive guidance for school districts on developing and implementing policies that promote healthy eating and physical activity.

It is my hope that local boards of education will use the *Action Guide* to customize policies that meet the local needs of the children and families they serve. With guidance and support from the Connecticut State Department of Education, and with the involvement of students, parents, school staff members and community partners, local school districts can develop and implement comprehensive school nutrition and physical activity policies that positively impact students' health and well-being.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Jodi Rell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

M. Jodi Rell
Governor
February 2006

A Message from Commissioner of Education

Betty J. Sternberg



Well-planned and effectively implemented school nutrition and fitness programs have been shown to enhance students' overall health, behavior and academic achievement in school. By developing and implementing districtwide policies on nutrition and physical activity, schools can create an environment to help reduce barriers to learning.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is pleased to provide districts with a resource to assist in these efforts. The *Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies* provides comprehensive guidance for school districts on developing and implementing policies to promote healthy eating and physical activity. It was reviewed by an outside committee representing 21 health and education organizations in Connecticut.

The *Action Guide* translates research-based policy development concepts and models into real-life strategies that work at the local level, based on the experience of 10 Connecticut pilot school districts. The *Action Guide* further supports the State Board of Education's *Position Statement on Nutrition and Physical Activity* (adopted December 7, 2005), which acknowledges that children's health is essential to their success in school, and emphasizes the Board's commitment to promoting policies that support a learning environment conducive to healthy lifestyles.

The *Action Guide* will help districts meet recommended state and national guidelines and the U.S. Department of Agriculture School Wellness Policy requirements (Public Law 108-265). The *Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies* is intended to guide local school districts in establishing and implementing policies and practices that:

- promote students' improved nutrition and increased physical activity;
- encourage families to support and participate in programs and initiatives that are intended to improve their children's health; and
- encourage schools to collaborate with community organizations to provide consistent health messages and to support school-based activities that promote healthy eating and physical activity.

I strongly encourage all Connecticut school districts to use the *Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies* to assist in developing and promoting local school policies and practices that consistently support student health and learning. The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to providing ongoing professional development and technical assistance opportunities to support districts' efforts to develop and implement local school nutrition and physical activity policies. I look forward to working together to optimize opportunities for improved student health and achievement in Connecticut.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betty J. Sternberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Betty J. Sternberg
Commissioner of Education
February 2006

Position Statement on Nutrition and Physical Activity in Schools

Adopted December 7, 2005

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that children's health is essential to their success in school. Research studies over the past decade have consistently concluded that student health status and school achievement are directly connected and, in fact, that student health is one of the most significant influences on learning and achievement. Healthy eating and regular physical activity are essential components of a healthy lifestyle. Well-planned and effectively implemented nutrition and physical activity programs have been shown to enhance students' overall health, behavior and academic achievement.

The Connecticut State Board of Education is committed to promoting policies that support a learning environment conducive to healthy lifestyles. School districts must engage students, parents, school staff members and community members to develop, implement and monitor policies and practices to promote and support healthy eating and sufficient physical activity.

The Role of Schools

School policies and practices play a significant role in promoting a healthy environment. Schools must create an environment that gives students consistent, accurate health information and ample opportunity to use it. The classroom, cafeteria and school activities should provide clear and consistent messages that explain and reinforce healthy eating and physical activity. Students must be taught skills for making healthy lifestyle choices not only in the school building, but also in their daily activities outside of school. Local school boards must establish and enforce policies and procedures that:

- help schools promote good nutrition and regular physical activity;
- incorporate nutrition and physical activity goals into school improvement plans;
- require schools to allow time in the curriculum for nutrition education, physical education and physical activity, and to incorporate these concepts throughout all subjects;
- seek revenue sources that do not require raising funds by competing with nutritious school meals;
- make decisions regarding the sale and use of foods and beverages at school-sponsored activities (such as fundraisers, parties and sports events) based on healthy eating goals;
- promote positive local media coverage of schools' efforts to improve the overall health of students and their families; and
- support families' efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children by providing education, resources and activities that help with positive role modeling.

The Role of Families

Good nutrition and physical activity practices begin at home. Family involvement is crucial. Families can help children develop healthy habits by providing healthy choices, talking about good nutrition, encouraging an interest in cooking, encouraging safe and positive physical activity, serving as positive role models, and participating in school health and nutrition programs. Schools must provide education and support so that families can:

- understand the importance of preparing nutritious meals and engaging in regular physical activity with their children;
- reinforce messages about the importance of proper nutrition and physical activity, and serve as role models for healthy living;
- advocate for a healthy and active school environment for their children, including providing healthy foods for school events;
- understand the goals of the school curriculum and encourage appropriate nutrition education and physical education; and
- understand the value of and encourage children's participation in quality school meal programs.

The Role of Students

Students have a responsibility for protecting their own health. Students must take advantage of opportunities to learn about nutrition and physical activity, and apply this knowledge by making healthy choices for themselves. Schools must support students by teaching and providing opportunities for students to:

- set personal goals for healthy eating and physical activity, and make healthy choices;
- actively engage in physical education and enjoy physical activity;
- advocate for nutrition education and physical activity options at school;
- take an active role in advocating for healthy food choices at school, not only in the cafeteria, but in vending machines, school stores and fundraising activities; and
- serve as role models for younger children.

The Role of Communities

Communities play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles by investing in the health, fitness, safety and well-being of children and their families. Community agencies can collaborate to provide integrated support services that build upon existing community resources and linkages with public schools. Schools must partner with communities to:

- work with families to support strategies that contribute to improved nutrition, increased physical activity and overall healthy lifestyles;
- provide and/or seek funds needed to support the school district's healthy lifestyles initiatives;
- develop and coordinate networks for communicating information and services that support nutrition and physical activity programs; and
- make facilities and programs available, accessible and affordable for the pursuit of individual as well as group physical activities and sports.

Acknowledgments

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- National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services
- Wyoming Action for Healthy Kids

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- American Cancer Society
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- Association of School Nurses of Connecticut
- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
- Connecticut Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Connecticut Association of Schools
- Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
- Connecticut Commission on Children
- Connecticut State Board of Education
- Connecticut State Department of Public Health
- Connecticut Association of Directors of Health
- Connecticut Dietetic Association
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- School Nutrition Association of Connecticut
- State Student Advisory Council on Education

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- Franklin Elementary School
- Killingly Public Schools
- Milford Public Schools
- Norwalk Public Schools
- Putnam Public Schools
- Regional School District #10
- Ridgefield Public Schools
- Salem Public School
- Windham Public Schools

The *Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies* was developed through a 2003-2005 Team Nutrition grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the Connecticut State Department of Education. This project has been partially funded with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



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